THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) and (b) In view of the prevailing high international price and decline in the domestic production of pulses due to drought, to make available imported pulses to the consumers at reduced cost, 5% reduction in import duty of pulses, as against prevailing duty rate of 10% has been suggested. Imports allowed under OGL have considerably helped in containing the consumer prices of "Dal".

Prices of pulses

3015. SHRI YADLAPATI VENKAT RAO: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is a decline in production of pulses in view of the drought situation this monsoon; and

(b) if so, the corrective steps taken to help keep prices of pulses down?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) The first advance estimate of foodgrains production for 2002-03 indicates the kharif production of pulses at 4.24 million tonnes as against the production of 5.09 million tonnes during kharif 2001-02, a decline of 17% due to drought situation this monsoon.

(b) The persisting gap in demand and availability of pulses is, to a large extent, met by imports. Imports of pulses are placed under OGL with a lower import duty of 10% to augment its availability in the country. Imports of 2.18 million tonnes of pulses during 2001-02 and 0.74 million tonnes for April-August, 2002 have helped in containing the prices at reasonable levels.

Export subsidy for sugar

3016. DR. VIJAY MALLYA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Chief Minister of Karnataka has requested him to grant adequate level of export subsidy to make exports of sugar possible from Karnataka;

(b) whether a report has been called for from the Directorate of Sugar in this regard; and

(c) the time frame for grant of export subsidy to the State?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Extension of Annapoorna Yojana

3017. DR. VIJAY MALLYA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Karnataka Government has submitted a proposal to the Central Government seeking amendment to the existing Annapoorna Yojana to cover supply of foodgrains to the destitute persons of 65 years and above;

(b) what is the present stage of consideration of the proposal; and

(c) by when a decision is expected in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI U. V. KRISHNAM RAJU): (a) Yes, Sir. A proposal for modifying the 'Annapurna Scheme' had been received when the Scheme was being administered as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme by the Government of India.

(b) and (c) The scheme along with National Social Assistance Programme has been transferred to the State Plan with effect from the financial year 2002-2003. The funds for the transferred schemes are now being released as additional Central Assistance to the State Plan and the State/UTs have the requisite flexibility in the choice and implementation of the Schemes.